

Stone Ring at Loh Ah Tsai, Lamma Island, Hong Kong

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The stone ring was found high on the west slope of the northwest part of Lamma Island about 100 metres above sea-level (Figs. 1 and 2), overlooking Hung Shing Yee. Current maps give no name for the spot itself; the villagers call the pass nearby Loh Ah Tsai 老鴉仔 (little old crow).

Mr K. M. A. Barnett, then District Commissioner for the New Territories, first noticed the ring in the autumn of 1956, and members of the Hong Kong University Archaeology Team made several visits to examine it, the first in November 1959.

The ring is an artifact, comprising an oval of stones of varying sizes, with a slightly constricted waist, and at its widest parts measuring 9 feet by 14½ feet; its long axis points west-south-west (Pl. I *inset*); 28 stones form the circumference and 4 more divide it across the waist, obviously a part of the design. Three random stones in the upper part of the oval appear to have been displaced. The stones are rough unhewn natural boulders of coarse-grained granite. Though residual granite boulders are plentiful in the vicinity, there are relatively few of them in the area of the ring, for some 50 square yards. This would suggest that it was deliberately cleared. The ring is on a gentle slope, but above and below the slopes are steeper.

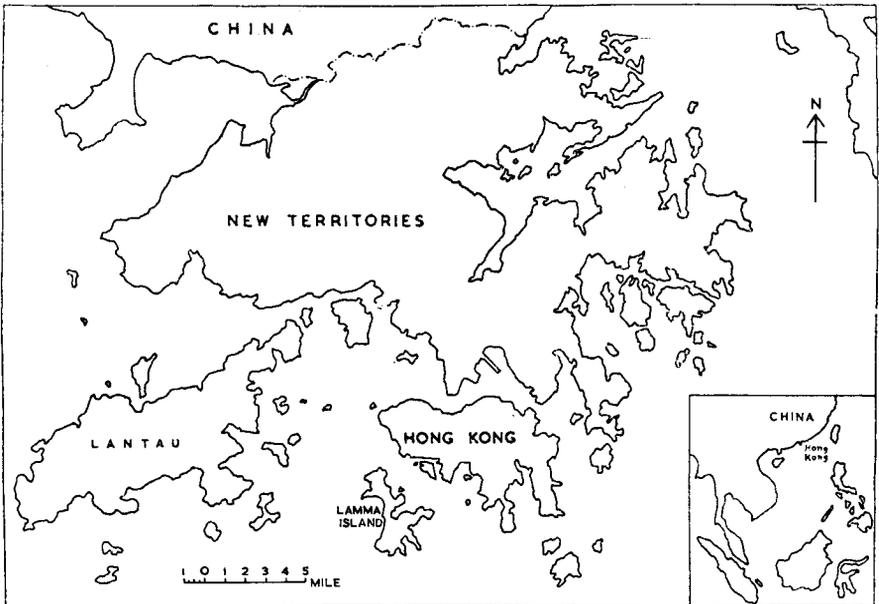
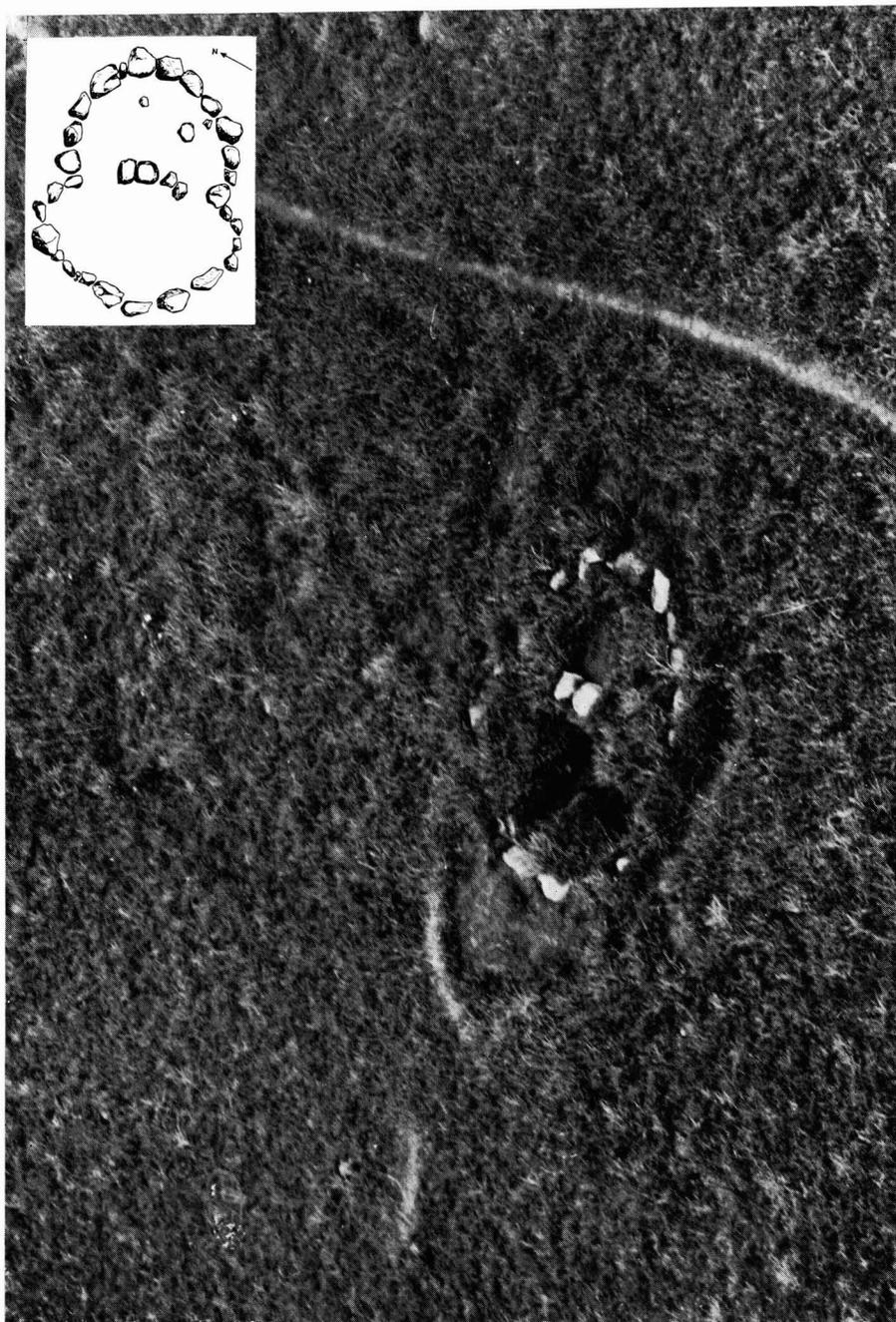


FIG. 1. Showing Lamma Island in the Hong Kong area



Photograph by Wing-Commander J. G. Bell, H.K.A.A.F.

Ring of stones on Lamma Island photographed from a helicopter.

Inset. Sketch of the ring.

Four stones are set outside the ring, in so regular a pattern that they appear to form a part of the whole design (only two appear in Pl. I); they lie in pairs: the first pair 15 feet from the lower end of the ring and 4 ft. 3 in. apart, precisely bracketing the long axis of the ring; the second a further 15 feet away from the first and 2 ft. 2 in. apart, again precisely bracketing the long axis of the ring. These measurements are significant. The distances of 15 feet and the almost exact ratio of the distances separating each pair (4 ft. 3 in. and 2 ft. 2 in.) show that the position of these paired stones is not accidental. Several other smaller stones lying near the ring have no clear relationship with the design, though there may have been an earlier outer ring.

The site is not a frequented spot. The nearest villages are Hung Shing Yee and Loh Ah Tsai on either side of the crest, near the sea below. The villagers walking to Sokku Wan take the footpath just above the ring (seen on Pl. I); none seem to have known of the existence of the ring.

Our first conjecture was that the ring was an a typical Chinese grave, but the trenches dug inside and outside the ring gave no evidence of burial, origin or date.

Another structure, possibly of similar purpose, exists at Taipo in the New Territories, many miles away. It is a smaller ring located in the garden of a private residence, and consists only of a few stones, one in the middle. The ground, however, was much disturbed, and many boulders were removed from the site when it was built on.

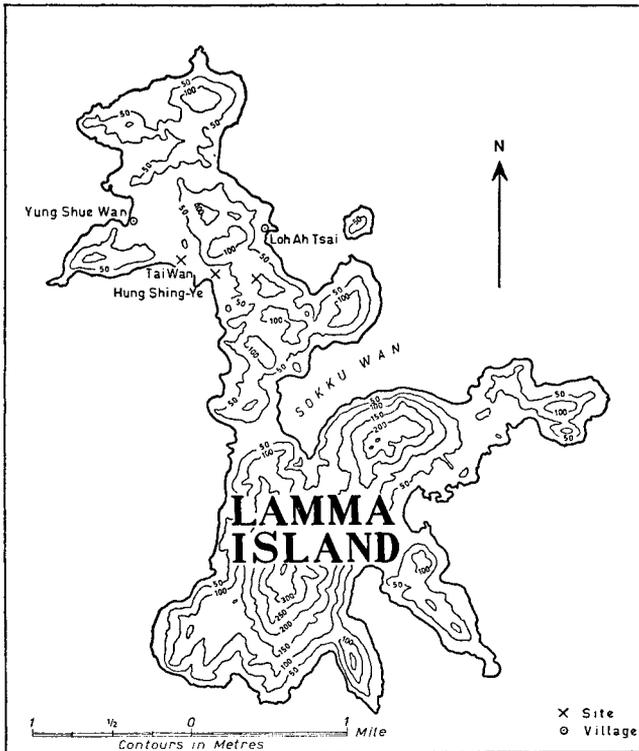


FIG. 2. Archæological sites on Lamma Island.